

For The Records



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.

JESSE CRAWFORD, POET OF THE ORGAN AT HIS BALLAD BEST. Two-record deluxe stereo album set, No. DO 1214/1215. \$10.50 postpaid from Doric Records, Box 282, Monterey, Calif. 93940.

Time slips by with such incredible speed; can it be really 13 years since the last Jesse Crawford organ release? His *Golden Opera Favorites*, on the Decca label, was issued around the time of his death in 1962. There have been reissues in the interim but no new records — until now.

Doric's Frank Killinger, long a Crawford enthusiast, spent much effort over the past 10 years making this 2-record set a reality. First he located a number of player organ rolls Crawford had made at the Wurlitzer factory, probably in the late '20s. Then came the job of finding an organ which duplicated the voices of the organ used by Crawford — one equipped to play rolls. He found it in the home of Richard Villemin in Porterville, Calif. Villemin, a skilled organ technician, went out of his way to give his 3/13 Wurlitzer the "Crawford sound" and he was most successful. There followed more years of getting clearances, although this wasn't actually necessary because per-

formances then couldn't be copyrighted. But Killinger preferred to be cautious. He provided for a financial cut of the profits for the organist's widow, Lucy, and also got the blessings of the present Wurlitzer Co.

The result is an imposing package, complete with a book-style envelope bearing voluminous jacket notes by Judd Walton and Stu Green, plus eight photos of the artist. The sound approximates that of Crawford's Victor 78 rpm records cut in Chicago in 1926-28. And some of the arrangements closely parallel those heard on the Victor records. The difference, of course, is marked; the Doric records are high fidelity and "miked" in stereo.

Because these cuts were taped from a roll-playing organ, isn't the result bound to be mechanical sounding, rather like so many player pianos? While there is an occasional note that seems to lack the finesse an artist of Crawford's calibre would insist on, for the most part one is unaware that a player mechanism is involved. The player used in the making of the perforated organ rolls was a far more subtle gadget than that used for most garden variety player pianos. The result is as though the artist had simply made a new recording, despite the circa 45 year delay between recording and release date.

The titles include some of Crawford's trademark arrangements such as *Russian Lullabye*, *The Road to Mandalay*, *La Paloma*, *A Dream*, *L'Armour Toujours*, *L'Amour*, *Sweet Mystery of Life*, *The Rosary* and *Roses of Picardy*. Other selections are *Baby's Birthday Party*, *Wedding of the*



Jesse Crawford

Painted Doll, *A Kiss in the Dark*, *Pale Moon*, *Song of the Islands*, a medley of Victor Herbert operetta tunes, medleys from two films, *Love Parade* and *Monte Carlo*, and more yet. One thing this collection proves is Crawford's effectiveness as a ballad player compared with his lesser prowess in the rhythm department. There are examples of both modes here, the majority, fortunately, being ballads. And the record also heightens Crawford's reputation as a ballad player. The rolls were made at the peak of his popularity and productivity. In later years he studied music with a famous teacher of pop musicians and his records from about 1938 on reflect the conservatism instilled by formal study. Gone were the flamboyancy and surprises of his earlier years, but this Doric set brings us the portamentos, harmonic inventiveness and other innovations which kept him at the top of his profession through the "golden era". This is indeed a rare treat — new high quality stereo records from a long gone but lovingly remembered niche in time.

Recording is first rate, as is the entire production. Welcome back, Jesse Crawford, if only for 108 minutes of your incomparable music.

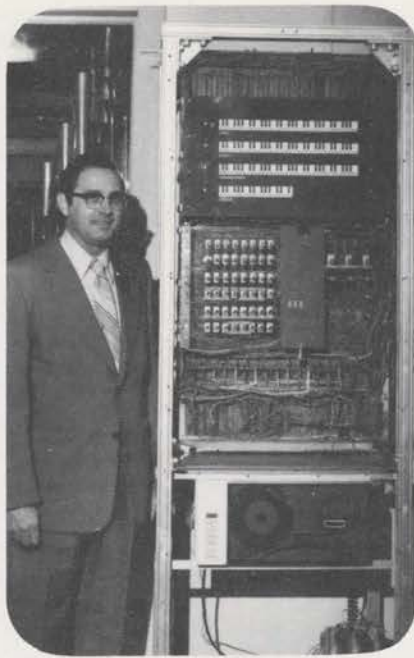
TWO LOVES HAVE I: JEAN AND GENII, Marvin Lautzenheiser's wife and a robot computer playing his 3/13 Wurlitzer. Mark label (Quadraphonic stereo) No. MC 8518. Available at \$6.00 postpaid from Jean's Organ Studio, 7216 Neuman St. Springfield, Va. 22150. (Va. residents please add 22 cents sales tax).

Here we come once more to the contest of man (in this case woman) versus machine. Pop standards played by his wife and his brainy machine are interspersed for a program played on Marvin Lautzenheiser's fine studio Wurlitzer (from the Triboro theatre, Queens, New York). A previous recording made on this instrument several years ago by someone whose name escapes us, was flawed in that the organ's reeds were out of tune, yet it indicated that the organ was a well-balanced one. This is a far superior representation of the instrument's potential, whether played by the transistor and diodes or by the attractive Mrs. Lautzenheiser.

Is the "Genii's" playing superior

to Jean's? Actually, it's no contest because the computer is only as good as the cards it digests, and those were punched by a human. The computer does eliminate the orchestral limitations of two hands and as many feet. Actually, if there is any contest it is between the live performance of Jean and the delayed performance of husband Marvin chopping little holes through a slab of cardboard. In weighing the performances, Jean and Marvin come off well as orchestrators, their skills being somewhat equal. As to the performances, we favor Jean's — but that may be due to the fact that she is the most glamorous grandma since Dietrich! And how much sex appeal has a robot got?!

This recording provides an opportunity to evaluate a computer as an organist. The computer obviously has access to more "hands" and "feet" simultaneously, and therefore more voices, obligatos, countermelodies etc. Yet, this has been achieved by human performers for many years through the use of multiple track recording, or "over dubbing." Outside of this obvious technical plus, why is the computer superior to the perforated paper roll (that may be also hand punched to



Marvin Lautzenheiser and GENII.
(Richard Neidich Photo)

add extra voices or registration variety) which has been with us for the past circa 80 years? Perhaps one of our technically gifted members would write an article comparing the computer with the perforated roll method of energizing an organ. Should make interesting reading to the uninitiated.

But back to "Jean vs Genii." The organ sounds great, despite an occasional reed pipe in need of attention. The Tibia is especially sexy, and in Jean's hands it "ooh-hoos" its message with telling effect during several of her tunes.

Jean's selections are: *A Man Without Love*, *Valley of the Dolls*, *Swanee* (with interpolations of *Dixie*), *I Talk to the Trees*, *Wells Fargo Wagon*, *Lida Rose*, and *Goodnight My Someone*. The tunes punched out by Marvin for the computer to play are *Two Loves Have I*, *Forgotten Dreams*, *Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo* (with piano pleasantries played by Jean), *Fascination*, *Darktown Strutters Ball*, *Twilight Time*, and a rousing *76 Trombones* punched out by Earl Sharits, a guy who should go into the business of goosing computers to bring out their best characteristics.

The liner notes tell the story of Genii and Jean. Recording is good but our review pressing has a definite "swish" which increases in distraction power as the stylus gets near the record center. However, we assume this flaw to be untypical. Even so, all records reviewed here are returnable if received in a faulty condition.

In summary, the music is entertaining, good easy listening. To determine whether Marvin's machine plays better than a human, we would need to hear a contest between two giants — a performer of the stature of say George Wright and an orchestrator with the skills of a Murray Cutter ("Gone with the Wind"), Henry Mancini or Burt Bacharach. Until then we'll settle for Genii vs Jean. But we favor Jean — for such obvious reasons.

PIECES OF DREAMS, Hector Olivera playing the RTOS Wurlitzer. No. EAR-10240 (stereo). \$6.00 postpaid from Rochester Theatre Organ Society, Box 8114, Rochester, N.Y. 14617.

The title of the album comes from an impression Mr. Olivera got from seeing a theatre organ disassembled and laid out for moving — a dream broken down into seemingly unrelated pieces, only to be later reassembled into a thing of beauty. All of which attests to the poetic observational talent of this young immigrant from Argentina. He has earned all sorts of impressive honors in the classical organ field, including holding down the top organ teaching job at the University of Buenos Aires — before he was 18! At that tender age he left his homeland to accept a scholarship at the Julliard School of Music in New York. About the time he won the AGO's National Competition for improvisational prowess he discovered that Anglo-American contraption — the theatre organ. His life would never be the same. Freed of the constraints and formalities of the classical organ field, he could literally let himself go, and he did. He first came to the attention of ATOSers as a pinch hitter for Ray Brubacher during the '72 convention at Washington, D.C. His performance at the Tivoli's little Wurlitzer is remembered chiefly for Mr. Olivera's well-done improvisations on mostly standard tunes and his Desi Arnaz style of Mcing. So much for background.

The playing and arrangements on the *Pieces of Dreams* album ranges from good to poor, with most being in the former classification. Two of the good ones are the novelty tunes *Teddy Bear's Picnic* and *Little Red Monkey*. But far more interesting is the Olivera way with a ballad such as *Pieces*



Jean Lautzenheiser (Richard Neidich Photo)



Hector Olivera at the Rochester Theatre Organ Society's 4/22 console.

of *Dreams*. Here he uses the contrasting expressive voices of the 4/22 with great subtlety. The music soars. In contrast, *Cumana* seems like 3:16 minutes of over-loud slambang. Then its back to balladry for an exquisite *Cry Me a River*.

The opener on side 2 is *In the Mood*. It must be classed as something of a musical disaster because the performer obviously doesn't know the tune. He plays ten inaccurate renditions of the initial 16 measures broken by only one flawed attempt at the bridge, all at full organ volume. Anyway, the "walking bass" comes through loud and clear. So does the closing schmear glissando.

All that is forgiven on hearing the sensitive and atmospheric *September in the Rain*, with its hints of the Buddy Cole performance and arrangement. *The Impossible Dream* gets a straightforward treatment with no surprises and so does that old warhorse, *Malaguena*. In fact, *Malaguena* is one of the most impressive readings. Perhaps the most delightful tune on the record is the closer, *Shine on Harvest Moon*. It's purely old-fashioned theatre organ.

Here is an album of contrasts, with the most rewarding music coming from Olivera's ballads. When he gets playing loud and fast, we are reminded of Hector's visual prowess as a pedal gymnast at the 1974 ATOS convention. His showmanship on the pedals was, to put it mildly, an eye-ful.

And the majority of his viewers seemed to love it. Seeing him record some of the bombastic but often complex tunes would have helped.

Recording is excellent and the organ sounds wonderful. The TLC bestowed on it by RTOS is quite evident. The jacket has pictures of organist and instrument, plus plenty of notes on both. There's lots of contrast here, with a great range in the level of performance. It's never dull.

FRED BOCK PLAYS 50 SONGS OF JOHN W. PETERSON, played on the Loren Whitney 4/34 studio organ. Two-record stereo set No. R 3259. \$5.98 postpaid from Heart-Warming Records, 1625 Broadway, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.



Fred Bock. Hymns or not, he swings.

In the December 1974 column we reviewed a 2-record set of 50 compositions by a writer unfamiliar to most T.O. buffs and played by an organist equally unknown to most hobbyists. Yet, 50 Songs by Ralph Carmichael aroused a lot of reader interest. The answer is yes, there are more pipe records played by Fred Bock. Apparently, the composer, John Peterson is well known in the sacred music field. Mr. Bock has taken pains to give each of the 50 a distinctive setting. As we mentioned in the previous review, there is little here to indicate that the tunes are religious in nature. Some are downright jazzy. Registration is almost entirely theatrical and the result sounds somewhat like cue music for radio dramas. We find the Bock treatments thoroughly

enjoyable. The Whitney organ sounds good, as always, and there is plenty of registration variety for all 50 tunes. For those who prefer to enjoy them as hymns, the words for each selection are printed in the double album. The music holds interest and the price is right.

CINEMA ORGAN ENCORES, William Davies playing the Wurlitzer organ in the Granada Cinema, Kingston (England). Deroy (stereo) No. 1028. \$6.50 by airmail from Deroy Records, Box 3, Carnforth, Lancs., England. (Checks on US banks accepted).

This is No. 35 in a series of theatre organ discs produced by Derrick Marsh. Again, it's a new artist and instrument for this side of the pond. The instrument is a rarely heard 3/10 Wurlitzer installed in an acoustically interesting hall. Mr. Davies, we recall, was one of the organists who broadcast the recently Americanized BBC Moller from its then ex-church studio. He is an exponent of the big organ sound, so much of the registration is on the heavy side, although he often simmers down to thinner combi-

1974 CONVENTION TAPES AVAILABLE FOR COPYING

Tape recordings of the 1974 Detroit convention programs are now available for copying or purchase. One copy (stereo only) of each of the eleven tapes is available, on loan, for 10 days only, to any chapter for copying by their members. Similar arrangements can be made for non-chapter ATOS members.

Send your request to Motor City Theatre Organ Society, Box 671, Dearborn, Michigan 48121, accompanied by a check for \$4.00 to cover cost of mailing. Inasmuch as requests will be honored in the order in which they are received, there may be a delay before the tapes can be sent to you. Only one copy of the tapes is available to be circulated in this manner.

Anyone who wishes to purchase any of the convention concerts should deal directly with David Lau who made the master recordings. A complete list, including all technical information about the tapes, is available upon request from David Lau, 839 Brookwood Place, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104 (Phone: (313) 994-4992).

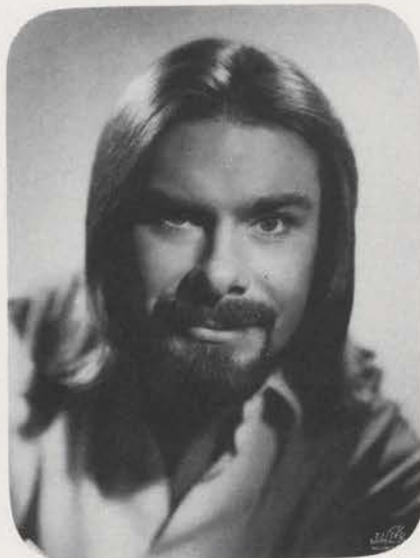
nations and then registration improves. Some of the selections are played in the uniquely English "quickstep" style. The organ was obviously in good repair for this taping session, and it sounds good even during the "trem" off passages.

The majority of selections are familiar to US ears. The tunes are *I Want to Be Happy*, *Edelweiss*, *Get Me To The Church on Time*, *Summer Time*, *76 Trombones*, *I Talk to the Trees*, *Hello Dolly*, *Getting to Know You*, *The Good Old Bad Old Days*, *Standing on the Corner*, *Flash Bang Wallop* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Playing is generally well done, except when the organist attempts to be flashy with devices which would even sound bad on the plug-in in the corner pub. Deroy records are sheathed in jackets with liner notes and photos of the artists. Recording is good.

— THE CALLIOPE CABINET —

CIRCUS CLOWN CALLIOPE, VOL. 2, Verne Langdon playing the Model 900 air-powered Tanglely Calliophone. No. PLP-1914 (stereo) \$6.50 (plus 5% sales tax for Californians) from Electric Lemon Record Co., 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90028



Verne Langdon

This recording came about as a result of the Volume 1 record we reviewed here over a year ago. It turned out to be a good seller, so Volume 2 follows, naturally. Just like Volume 1, the music is played on a 43-whistle Tanglely. All we wrote in the Feb. 1974 issue about Volume 1, applies equally to Volume 2. Only the

tune list has been changed, and we find the titles a bit more interesting than those on the earlier disc: *Billboard March*, *One of Those Songs*, *Song of the Nairobi Trio* (from the old Ernie Kovacs TV show), *Twelfth Street Rag*, *Upside-Down Cake*, Offenbach's *Barcarolle*, *Glow Worm*, *Aba Daba Honeymoon*, *Skaters' Waltz*, *Tales From the Vienna Woods*, *The Whistler and His Dog*, *Song for Mouse*, *Barney Google*, *The Stripper*, *Old Piano Roll Blues* and *Mr. Big Top*.

Hurry, Hurry, Hurry — the big Show's about to start!

THE PLUG-IN CORNER

IT'S A GOOD DAY, Leroy Davidson playing the Hammond Concorde Organ. Vocals by Ella Smith. DN-737, stereo. \$5.50 postpaid from Hammond Organ Studio, 216 East Rowland, Covina, Calif. 91722.

Leroy Davidson is a well-known young organist on the West Coast. He is one of the most prominent and gifted exponents of the Mildred Alexander method of organ study, although he is not entirely a product of that system. His work has been largely with Hammond organs although he has been heard in concert on other brands, notably Conns. Leroy has put in time on the Cocktail Lounge circuit, "Mr. A's" in San Diego for one, but now confines his efforts to teaching and concerts.

Leroy is a gifted arranger and his registration takes full advantage of his instrument's facilities. His use of the "slow Leslie" offers welcome relief from an almost choppy flute heard



Leroy Davidson

(Stufoto)

throughout the record. He also makes effective use of percussions. Stylings exhibited here show a very prominent melody line. The organ solos include a very expressive *Thanks For You* played in a David Rose style (the piano sounds like a real 88), *My Way* (with a harpsichord/zither effect prominent), *Now You've Gone and Left Me* (blues tune featuring a sultry Clarinet), *Put On a Happy Face*, *Dreamsville*, a Sing medley, and *It's Almost Like Being in Love*. These solos are interspersed with vocals by Ella Smith whose voice is a warm sexy/dark. She sings expressively in the alto range and to her credit she remains on pitch during sustained notes. In fact her even tones often contrast with those of the deep trem of the Hammond. Ella's tunes are *It's a Good Day*, *Killing Me Softly*, *It's Yesterday Once More*, *Just a Closer Walk*, *Here's That Rainy Day*, *My Way*, *Consider Yourself* and a 38-second version of *I Wish You Love*. These tunes bring out Leroy's expertise as an accompanist. He's right on, all the way.

Recording is good. This one should be especially interesting to dealers as a demo of the Concorde's range of facilities. Leroy brings them all into play.

THE DUGOUT

HELEN DELL PLAYS BASEBALL, 2-selection, 45 rpm 7" stereo disc. MAS-2024. \$1.50 postpaid from Malar Records Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91210.

As anyone who gets within 15 feet of our Associate Editor Lloyd Klos knows, Helen Dell is the official organist for the L.A. Dodgers. She pumps morale into the local sluggers each time they whoop it up in Chavez Ravine, relying on her trusty Conn model 651. This truncated vinyl disc bears only two selections, both dear to the hearts of baseball fans everywhere, *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* and *It's A Beautiful Day for a Ball Game*, played with gusto — on an unidentified pipe organ.

PERCHANCE TO DREAM, the late Paul Beaver's only theatre pipe organ recording (Rapture, stereo, No. 11111) is available in limited supply through Malar Records (address above). Price postpaid is \$5.98. □